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St/I/R

1 February 1957

THRU : Chief, D/I
Acting Chief, I/CI

Evaluation of State Despatches on 1956 Damascus International Trade Fair from I/CI's Point of View

1. The mission of the branch is to develop economic intelligence on consumer industries, wholesale and retail trade, and consumer expenditures in nations of the Sino-Soviet Bloc. Corollaries of such a broad mission are a large flow of diverse information into the branch and the inability of the branch to investigate deeply more than a few items within its purview. It is against this background that the present evaluation of a series of State Department Despatches Covering the Damascus International Fair, September 1956, should be interpreted. In the following paragraphs each despatch is reviewed in turn, and a final paragraph of general comment added.

2. Dsp 82, 20 Aug 56: of no interest.

3. Dsp 83, 20 Aug 56: of background interest.

4. Dsp 102, 1 Sep 56: of general interest as a check of light industry products whose export to this area may be anticipated.

5. Dsp 107, 8 Sep 56: of no interest.

6. Dsp 114, 11 Sep 56: of no interest.

7. Dsp 115, 11 Sep 56: of no interest.

8. Dsp 117, 13 Sep 56: same as paragraph 4 above.

9. Dsp 122, 14 Sep 56: of no interest.

10. Dsp 123, 14 Sep 56: of no interest.

11. Dsp 135, 20 Sep 56: of background interest for possible comparison of West German export efforts vs. efforts of European satellites for durable consumer goods.

12. Dsp 147, 26 Sep 56: of background interest on subject of high-quality Soviet films.

13. Dsp 148, 26 Sep 56: of no interest, because no comprehensive information on area covered by branch is involved.

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14. Dsp 149, 28 Sep 56: of general interest for list of consumer products; most of despatch deals with machinery and equipment; listing of dealers and distributors of consumer products is information in finer detail than branch normally uses; quality of merchandise, described on page 1 of enclosure 7, is an important issue in any trade fair coverage, although in this case consumer goods are not specifically mentioned.

15. Dsp 153, 1 Oct 56: same as paragraph 14 above.

16. Dsp 156, 2 Oct 56: of interest for comments on quality.

17. Dsp 158, 3 Oct 56: of limited background interest, for reason given in paragraph 11 above.

18. Dsp 160, 3 Oct 56: of interest in indicating kinds of manufactured consumer goods which Communist China is able to sell cheaply to underdeveloped nations; the statistics for light industry on the pavilion walls are all covered elsewhere in the Communist Chinese press; comments on page 1 of enclosure 5 on quality of interest, especially failure of textile machinery; comments on willingness of Chinese Communists actually to export of interest.

19. Dsp 164, 4 Oct 56: same as paragraph 14 above, except that more details on quality on page 1 of enclosure 7 would be welcome.

20. Dsp 167, 5 Oct 56: of no interest.

21. Dsp 170, 5 Oct 56: of no interest.

22. Dsp 223, 14 Nov 56: of considerable interest for comments, page 2 of enclosure 6, on poor quality of television receivers (of course, supplementary pieces of information from other fairs and other sources must be considered), which is contrary to our previously held impression that quality of USSR electrical goods for consumers is good.

23. In general: The whole series of despatches helps in identifying what kinds of consumer goods may be expected to move in foreign trade in this area. Commendable care is taken in trying to find out if exhibits are mainly for propaganda or for commercial purposes. Information on quality of consumer goods is one of the best things to be gained from coverage of fairs, although equating quality of goods at fairs with quality of the entire domestic output is hazardous; these despatches vary in the worth of their coverage of quality. Since so many other products are covered, the information on our area of responsibility is necessarily going to be a small part of the whole.

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